

2025 World Conference Against A and H Bombs – Hiroshima (August 4 – 6)
August 5 Workshop 1

Getting Japan to Join the TPNW (and What to Do About Trump)

Remarks by Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation, USA
and Mayors for Peace North American Coordinator

In 1995, the then-Mayor of Hiroshima, Takashi Hiraoka, testified before the International Court of Justice in The Hague: “History is written by the victors. Thus, the heinous massacre that was Hiroshima has been handed down to us as a perfectly justified act of war. As a result, for over 50 years we have never directly confronted the full implications of this terrifying act for the future of the human race.”

In contrast, the United States representative told the Court: “We believe the policy of nuclear deterrence has saved many millions of lives from the scourge of war during the past 50 years. In this special sense, nuclear weapons have been ‘used’, defensively, every day for over half a century - to preserve the peace.”

During the June NATO Summit in the Hague, Donald Trump told reporters that the U.S. attacks on Iran’s three nuclear technology facilities were “essentially the same thing” as the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. According to Trump, “That ended that war and this ended [this] war.”

The current Mayor of Hiroshima, Kazumi Matsui, responded: “It seems to me that he does not fully understand the reality of the atomic bombings, which, if used, take the lives of many innocent citizens, regardless of whether they were friend or foe, and threaten the survival of the human race.”¹

Trump’s remarks provide a remarkable window into the mindset of the unhinged person who has his finger on the button.

Some have attached significance to Trump’s casual remarks at a February press conference, where he said he would like to lead changes in military spending and denuclearization with China and Russia. “There’s no reason for us to be building brand-new nuclear weapons. We already have so many, you could destroy the world 50 times over, 100 times over. And here we are building new nuclear weapons. And they’re building new nuclear weapons. And China’s trying to catch up.” But, he said, those conversations would only happen when things “calm down a little bit.”²

However, Donald Trump is a pathological liar, an unreliable, unprincipled, delusional, narcissistic, racist, fascist, xenophobic, transphobic, misogynist. I have seen it said that even he doesn’t know when he’s lying. Chaos is the watchword for his administration. It seems like they are doing everything possible to ensure that things do not “calm down.”

Remember that it was Trump, during his first term, who pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal. On February 4, 2025, Trump signed a National Security Presidential Memorandum “restoring maximum pressure on the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, denying Iran all paths to a nuclear weapon, and countering Iran’s malign influence abroad.”³

Upon signing, Trump said that he wants to work out a deal with Iran so everyone “can live together.” But, when asked about an alleged plot by Iranian proxies to assassinate him, Trump responded: “[I]f they did that, they would be obliterated. That would be the end. *I’ve left instructions, if they do it, they get obliterated, there won’t be anything left.*”⁴

This ominous threat is reminiscent of Trump’s terrifying 2017 warning that if North Korea made any more threats to the United States, “*They will be met with fire, fury and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before.*”⁵

Remember too, that as the number of ratifications of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) neared the 50 that would trigger its entry-into-force, in October of 2020, under Trump’s leadership, the United States sent a letter to the 47 countries that had at that time ratified the Treaty, urging them to withdraw their support.⁶

Over one hundred years ago, an Austrian sociologist and political activist named Rudolph Goldscheid wrote, “The budget is the skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies.”

Like everything else, the U.S. federal budget process has been in chaos. But we finally have the numbers from the Fiscal Year 2026 budget request.

U.S. nuclear weapons spending and overall military spending are at all time highs, while spending for social welfare programs is being slashed. There are seven new nuclear warheads in the pipeline as well as new nuclear weapons delivery systems including intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarines, and bombers. There’s also new funding for space-based weapons and the provocative so-called “Golden Dome,” multi-layered missile defense system. These investments will likely spur more arms racing with other nuclear-armed states, making it even more difficult to get arms control much less disarmament negotiations underway.

It seems blindingly obvious to us here that Japan – the only country thus far to experience the horrors of nuclear weapons in war – should join the TPNW. But in many ways, my Japanese colleagues face the same challenge that we face in the United States. The government of Japan is fully invested in the ideology of nuclear deterrence as a central component of its national security policy, and it relies on the U.S. to provide this perceived protection through its extended “nuclear umbrella.”

In the years following the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan and the United States forged a strong alliance, which, according to the joint statement issued by Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru and President Donald Trump this past February “remains the cornerstone of peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.” According to the same statement, America’s ongoing “commitment to the defense of Japan, using its full range of capabilities, including nuclear capabilities,” is integral to that relationship.⁷

Both the Obama and Biden Administrations were reportedly considering including no first use or sole purpose policies in their respective Nuclear Posture Reviews. However, this was dropped in part, in the face of opposition from Japan and other U.S. allies including South Korea, and NATO.⁸

Now, with the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine and its attendant nuclear threats, fears of escalating conflicts on the Korean peninsula and between China and Taiwan, coupled with

China's and North Korea's increasing nuclear capabilities, some in Japan are beginning to question the reliability of the United States as a strategic ally, and are even suggesting that Japan should develop its own "nuclear deterrent."

Instead, what is urgently needed to ensure "peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond" is an unprecedented campaign of strategic diplomacy among the states in the region and the United States.

It is very difficult to imagine in these dark and dystopian times, how we are going to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons, but we have to imagine it. As Albert Einstein said: "Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life's coming attractions."

We must find a way to fundamentally challenge the dominant paradigm of "national security" through military might at any cost.

As recognized in the 1945 Constitution of UNESCO:

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."⁹

I believe this process must take place from the bottom up – in the United States and in Japan.

I'll be happy to describe some of the grassroots efforts underway in the United States during the question-and-answer period.

¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/hiroshima-mayor-trump-does-not-fully-understand-the-reality-of-the-atomic-bombings/ar-AA1HQYCO?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

² <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/donald-trump-makes-major-nuclear-weapons-announcement/ar-AA1z0v50?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-restores-maximum-pressure-on-iran/>

⁴ <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/4981105-doj-iran-plot-trump/>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/09/politics/trump-fire-fury-improvise-north-korea/index.html>

⁶ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-urges-countries-to-withdraw-from-un-nuclear-ban-treaty/>

⁷ <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d01110/>

⁸ <https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/defense-security/20240730-201487/>

⁹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution>